



The Attributes of Allāh ¹

Imam Taqīyyudīn al-Subkī

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Claim: You [the Ash`arīs, Maturīdīs] contradict yourselves. You affirm for Allāh ﷻ Life, Power, Will, Knowledge, Speech, Hearing and Sight, while making *ta`nīl* (figurative interpretation) of *istiwā* (rising), *nuḥūl* (descending), *māji'*, *ityān*, *wajh* (face), *yad* (hand), *sāq*, *qadam* (foot), *janb* (side), *`ayn* (eye) and relocation in (various) levels. The basic rule with regards to the Attributes is one, so if you affirm the seven Attributes, what prevents you from affirming the rest? What is the difference? This is nothing less than contradiction.

Response: The response to this consists of two points:

Point one:

We say that of *istiwā*, *nuḥūl*, *māji'*, *ityān*, *wajh*, *yad*, *sāq*, *qadam*, *janb*, *`ayn* and relocation in (various) levels are not from the Attributes. The claim that they are Attributes is deception ² and this is shown by three things.

1. Every possessor of intellect knows that these things mentioned such as *istiwā* with the meaning of sitting, *nuḥūl*, *māji'*, and *wajh* and its likes are closer to the attributes of bodies (*ajsām*) than [the attributes of] Will, Power, and Knowledge.
2. These things that we mentioned are considered parts according to the people of the language and not adjectives (*awsāf*). So they are explicit in indicating composition (*tarkīb*), and composition is for bodies. So your mentioning of the word *awsāf* (adjectives-attributes) is deception. All of the people of the language do not understand from *wajh*, *`ayn*, *janb*, and *qadam* except that which are composed parts (*ajzā'*). They do not understand from *istiwā* that means sitting except that it is a manner of placing something

¹ The response provided is a compilation of quotes from Imam Taqīyyudīn al-Subkī's *al-sayf as-saqīl* which were provided by Sīdī Samih Yusuf as a response to the question cited. Sīdī Samih added: "All what I have done here is put the answer into sections in order to make it easier to understand and I have slightly added to it for the purpose of clarification."

<http://www.aslein.net/showthread.php?p=20558>

² Shaykh Gibril Fouad Haddad comments: "He means they are not attributes in the same sense as the fundamental attributes. So we use qualifying terms like *sifāt idāfiyya* or *khabariyya* to make the distinction or, as he does, we say that such are not *sifāt* at all, meaning in the same sense as the *sifāt* of the dhāt. Wallahū a`lam."

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solid on a place. They [do not understand] from *māji'*, *ityān*, and *nuzūl* except movement that is particular to bodies. As for Will, Power, Life and its likes, they are the attributes of the essence (*sifāt al-dhāt*).

3. If these above mentioned things were presented to a normal person be it a woman, a child, a non-Arab, or a common layman Arab and the generality of people, would they understand from *istiwā*, *nuzūl*, *māji'*, *ityān*, *wajh*, *yad*, *sāq*, *qadam*, *janb*, *`ayn* and relocation in (various) levels, and others that I have mentioned the meaning of a body (*jism*), and would he conceptualize that in himself or not? If he responds saying that he does not understand from that anything save the meaning of a body, then that is enough for you of sin with Allāh and misguiding the likes of these [common people] and encouraging them to believe in *tajsīm* that you yourself claim with your tongue to not say. So what is actualized from you is misguiding the majority of the world. As for you in yourself, if you were lying in your censure of that then you have gathered lying along with corruption in creed. If you were true in your claim then you have deceived yourself and imagined a distinction for yourself.

Point two:

Assuming that these things mentioned such as *istiwā*, *nuzūl*, *māji'*, *ityān*, *wajh*, *yad*, *sāq*, *qadam*, *janb* and *`ayn* are attributes like Will, Power, and Knowledge, then we say:

1. Will, Power, and Knowledge within us is two matters. One of them is an accident established in a body (*`arad qā'im bil jism*), and Allah ﷻ is far removed from that. The second matter is the meanings that relate to what is willed (*murād*), to what is in [ones power (*maqḍūr*)], and what is known (*ma'lūm*). And the Lord ﷻ is described with those things and they are not restricted to bodies and for that reason we affirm them for Allāh ﷻ.

2. Likewise with *istiwā*, *nuzūl*, *māji'*, *ityān*, *wajh*, *yad*, *sāq*, *qadam*, *janb* and *`ayn*. With these, they are two matters. One, is that they are parts which is clear in denoting composition and Allah ﷻ is clearly far removed from that. The second is the meaning that are related to these things. They are explained according to the context they appear in among the *ayāt* and *abādīth* as is well known. We affirm this for Allāh ﷻ, so for example, *istiwā* is explained as managing the affairs, *yad* is explained as power or bounty or generosity according to the context and we affirm this for Allāh ﷻ, as well in the remainder (of the words) mentioned. And Allāh is the source of success.

